

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 EB-11 MC-02 ACDA-19 OMB-01

DRC-01 /101 W

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R 191117Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5701

INFO USCINCEUR

CHUSMTM DHAHRAN

SECDEF

DA WASHDC

S E C R E T JIDDA 5595

FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, SA

SUBJECT: SANG MODERNIZATION PROPOSAL

REF STATE 244585; JIDDA 5594

SUMMARY: USG PROPOSAL TO MODERNIZE SANG PRESENTED DECEMBER 13. SANG CHIEF PRINCE ABDALLAH DESIRES SAM SYSTEM SIMILAR TO BRITISH RAPIER BE INCLUDED IN MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. RECOMMEND WE OFFER VULCAN SYSTEM AND ATTEMPT DISCOURAGE ACQUISITION SAM MISSILES FROM ANY SOURCE. END SUMMARY

1. USG PROPOSAL TO MODERNIZE THE SANG WAS PRESENTED TO PRINCE ABDALLAH, SANG COMMANDER, BY U.S. ARMY PROGRAM MANAGER ON DECEMBER 13. ABDALLAH WAS PLEASED IN GENERAL WITH THE PROPOSAL; HOWEVER, HE RAISED THE ISSUE OF AIR DEFENSE AND REQUESTED FURTHER
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USG RESPONSE.

2. PRINCE ABDALLAH INTERRUPTED THE FORMAL PROPOSAL SEVERAL TIMES TO ASK IF ANY SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE WAS INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE. HE WAS SHOWN THE TWIN-CALIBER 50 MACHINE GUN TURRET ON THE COMMANDO VEHICLE, BUT KEPT COMING BACK TO THE SAME POINT THAT HE REQUIRED A MISSILE FOR DEFENSE AGAINST JET AIRCRAFT. THE PROGRAM MANAGER EXPLAINED THAT U.S. ARMY TACTICAL DOCTRINE DID NOT PROVIDE FOR SUCH MISSILES AT INFANTRY BATTALION LEVEL; THAT WE RELIED ON OUR AIR FORCE AND AIR DEFENSE UNITS FROM HIGHER ECHELONS. WE ASSUMED THAT THE SANG SIMILARLY WOULD RELY ON THE ROYAL SAUDI AIR FORCE AND ARMY AIR DEFENSE UNITS SUCH AS THE HAWK BATTERIES. ABDALLAH REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO DUPLICATE THE MODA AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, BUT THAT SANG UNITS OFTEN OPERATED AS ISOLATED TASK FORCES IN LOCATIONS WHERE THEY MUST HAVE SOME ORGANIC CLOSE-IN AIR DEFENSE TO PROTECT AGAINST JET AIRCRAFT.

3. SPECIFICALLY PRINCE ABDALLAH DESIRES A MEDIUM RANGE SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SIMILAR TO THE BRITISH RAPIER SYSTEM. THERE IS NO U.S. MISSILE COMPARABLE TO RAPIER AVAILABLE FOR THE SANG. RECOMMEND WE REAFFIRM TO ABDALLAH THAT OUR DOCTRINE DOES NOT INCLUDE MEDIUM RANGE AIR DEFENSE MISSILES AT BATTALION LEVEL, AND WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THAT HE SEEK TO OBTAIN MISSILES AT THIS TIME DUE TO THEIR HEAVY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS. RECOMMEND WE OFFER HIM THE VULCAN (VERSION IN PRODUCTION FOR BELGIUM WITHOUT RADAR) AS THE BEST AIR DEFENSE WEAPON FOR HIS REQUIREMENTS. SHOULD HE INSIST ON A MISSILE, RECOMMEND WE TELL HIM WE CANNOT PROVIDE NOR CAN WE ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRAINING OR MAINTENANCE ON ANY HE MAY OBTAIN ELSEWHERE.

4. ALTHOUGH REFTTEL AUTHORIZED OFFER OF VULCAN TO SANG, IN CONVERSATIONS WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON DURING SECSTATE VISIT IN RIYADH, WE WERE INSTRUCTED TO DEFER ANY OFFER UNTIL FURTHER REVIEW AS THE VULCAN SYSTEM HAD IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENTIRE

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ARAB/ISRAELI QUESTION.

5. PRINCE ABDALLAH IS NOW EN ROUTE OVERLAND WITH KING FEISAL TRAVELLING FROM RIYADH TO JIDDA. HE IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE LATE DECEMBER 19 AND STAY THROUGH THE PILGRIMAGE SEASON AFTER WHICH HE WILL DEPART FOR THE ANNUAL TRIP AMONG THE NORTHERN DESERT TRIBES. HE DESIRES A PROMPT RESPONSE ON

THE AIR DEFENSE ISSUE. WE SHOULD PROVIDE OUR
RESPONSE NOT LATER THAN DECMEBER 22.
AKINS

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